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Eighth-graders get hearing lesson with 'Listen Up!'

When eighth-grade students started public school in Palm Beach County, they got an ear full. That's because they were hearing about the staggering number of students who have hearing loss and how they can prevent it.

Listen Up!, a new book inspired by a West Palm Beach resident, is being presented by eighth-grade teachers to educate students on how loud sounds in their everyday lives can contribute to hearing.

"Much like using sun block to prevent skin cancer down the road, protecting yourself from loud noises, antibiotics and even head traumas can greatly protect your hearing in the future," said Kathlyn Maguire of West Palm Beach, who has suffered profound hearing loss in both ears for more than 40 years.

Maguire commissioned writer Natalie Garibian Peters to author the 86-page book geared to pre-teens and teens to get the message out using, in part, blogs and personal diaries to tell the story of two high school teens both suffering hearing loss.

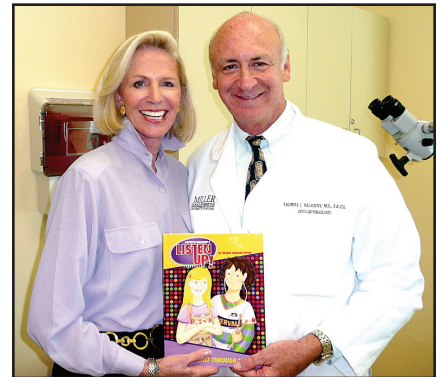
"The statistics are staggering," Maguire said. "For every 100 students, 13 have some form of hearing loss. It's also the most prevalent chronic defect in newborns. Hearing loss is no longer a condition of aging. It can happen to anyone at any age. But every person has the ability to do something about it. By reducing noise, you can reduce hearing loss. It's that simple."

Precautions include eliminating elevated sounds and high volume iPods and music players, close proximity to amplifiers at concerts, viral infections and head traumas. All of these can cause permanent damage.

"We hope to expand that initiative to include other county schools in Florida and private schools as well," Maguire said.

Filled with graphics and trivia questions, the book provides young readers with a view into how the ear works, as well as the causes and prevention of hearing loss.

Maguire speaks at schools and organizations. She continues to fund



Kathlyn Maguire, founder of Empowerment Through Hearing, a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness on hearing loss, with Dr. Thomas J. Balkany, Hotchkiss professor, chairman of the Department of Otolaryngology and professor of neurological surgery and pediatrics at University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. They collaborated on the book, 'Listen Up!' for pre-teens and teens on hearing loss and its prevention. The book is being presented in the county public's schools.

her Empowerment organization and has dedicated herself to creating a hearing educational and awareness program.